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# *Intellectual Discourse*

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Volume 33

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## Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

## Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ	a		اَ، اِيَّ	an
اُ	u		اُو	un
اِ	i		اِي	in
اَ، اِ، اِيَّ	ā		اُو	aw
اُو	ū		اِيَّ	ay
اِي	ī		اُو	uww, ū (in final position)
			اِيَّ	iyy, ī (in final position)

*Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>*



# Community-Centric Governance: Unveiling the Challenges and Strategies in West Aceh Villages

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**Nellis Mardhiah\*\*\***

**Nodi Marefanda\*\*\*\***

**Abstract:** Village governments in West Aceh face persistent challenges in implementing the good governance principles mandated under Indonesia's Village Law (No. 6 of 2014). This study aims to identify these challenges and develop strategies to strengthen community-centric governance in villages. It addresses the research questions of what obstacles hinder the implementation of good governance at the village level and how these obstacles can be overcome. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, collecting data from three sub-districts in West Aceh representing varying levels of development, to examine how good governance principles are applied in village administration. Key findings indicate strengths in legal enforcement, equality, and an efficient, consensus-oriented administration, but also highlight shortcomings in community participation and responsiveness. To address these gaps, the study proposes continuous training for village officials, recruiting

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qualified youth, and fostering broader community engagement. In conclusion, enhancing community involvement and responsiveness is crucial for achieving effective and sustainable local governance.

**Keywords:** Village Governance, Good Governance, Community Participation, Challenges, Strategies.

**Abstrak:** Pentadbiran kampung di Aceh Barat menghadapi cabaran berterusan dalam melaksanakan prinsip tadbir urus yang baik yang diamanatkan di bawah Undang-undang Desa Indonesia (No. 6 Tahun 2014). Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti cabaran-cabaran ini dan membangunkan strategi untuk mengukuhkan tadbir urus berpaksikan komuniti di kampung. Ia menjawab persoalan kajian apakah halangan yang menghalang pelaksanaan tadbir urus yang baik di peringkat kampung dan bagaimana halangan ini boleh diatasi. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, mengumpul data daripada tiga mukim di Aceh Barat yang mewakili pelbagai peringkat pembangunan, untuk mengkaji bagaimana prinsip tadbir urus yang baik diterapkan dalam pentadbiran kampung. Penemuan utama menunjukkan kekuatan dalam penguatkuasaan undang-undang, kesaksamaan, dan pentadbiran yang cekap, berorientasikan konsensus, tetapi juga menyerlahkan kelemahan dalam penyertaan dan responsif masyarakat. Untuk menangani jurang ini, kajian ini mencadangkan latihan berterusan untuk pegawai kampung, merekrut belia yang berkecambah, dan memupuk penglibatan masyarakat yang lebih luas. Kesimpulannya, meningkatkan penglibatan dan respon masyarakat adalah penting untuk mencapai tadbir urus tempatan yang berkesan dan mampan.

**Kata Kunci:** Tadbir Urus Kampung, Tadbir Urus Baik, Penyertaan Komuniti, Cabaran, Strategi.

## Introduction

This study explores the challenges and strategies associated with strengthening village governance to achieve good governance at the local level. Despite facing various hurdles, it underscores the importance of implementing the principles of good management across all government lines (Jati, 2022). A joint study by the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) of Teuku Umar University and the Regional Planning and Development Agency (BAPPEDA) of West Aceh Regency revealed suboptimal management of village funds in the region. This deficiency

is attributed to the underperformance of the Village Owned Enterprise (BUMG), resulting in a failure to fully realise the mandates outlined in Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages.

West Aceh Regency, like many other rural regions in Indonesia, has faced complex governance challenges due to historical, political, and socio-economic factors. The region was significantly affected by the Aceh conflict (1976–2005) and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, both of which disrupted governance structures and local development initiatives (Zikriati & Arani, 2024). The conflict weakened administrative capacities at the village level, creating institutional gaps that still affect governance today. Although the 2005 Helsinki Peace Agreement brought political stability, many villages continue to struggle with bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of skilled personnel, and inadequate financial management, all of which hinder effective governance (Wijatmoko, Armawi, & Fathani, 2023). Additionally, inconsistent application of village autonomy laws has led to disparities in governance effectiveness among the different villages in the region.

Furthermore, socio-economic disparities and limited community participation have slowed the progress of local governance reform (Shaleh & Islam, 2024). Many rural communities in West Aceh face high poverty rates, limited infrastructure, and low levels of civic engagement, making it difficult for village administrations to fully implement good governance principles. Despite the aim of Law No. 6 of 2014 to promote decentralised governance, the lack of technical expertise, financial literacy, and policy consistency among village officials has resulted in mismanagement of village funds (Qotadah, Wakhid, & Susanto, 2022). Additionally, there are concerns regarding political interference and a lack of transparency in financial planning and project implementation, further complicating the efforts to strengthen governance at the village level. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that includes capacity-building for village officials, promoting transparency in financial management, and fostering community involvement in decision-making processes.

Villagers, both in groups and as individuals, require services for various needs, such as health, education, work, marriage, inheritance, birth, and licensing. The effective implementation of village government must adhere to the principles outlined in Law No. 6 of 2014 Section

24, including legal certainty, orderly governance, prioritising public interest, openness, proportionality, professionalism, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, local wisdom, diversity, and participatory governance (Syarif, 2023). Despite the persistent demand for quality government services, administrative processes often remain convoluted due to the sluggish performance of bureaucratic apparatus, resulting in inefficiencies. The village government holds a crucial responsibility in providing services to the community, and the quality of these services depends on factors such as effectiveness, efficiency, and community perceptions. However, a significant challenge at the village level is related to the consistent application of good governance principles, as highlighted by research conducted by Ilham Arie Saputra (2013).

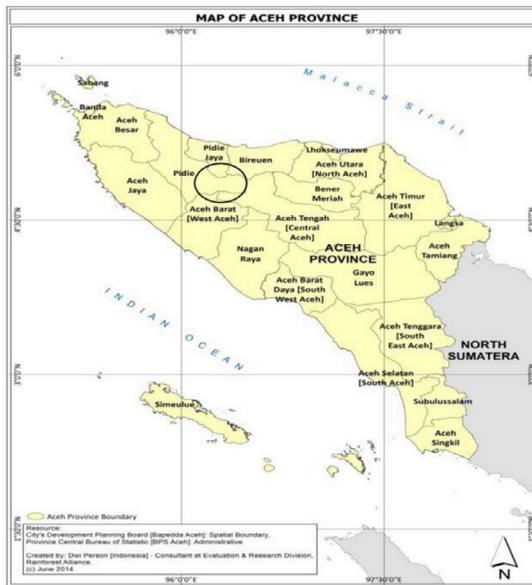


Figure 1: Map of Aceh Province

Source: BAPPEDA Aceh

To address this challenge, the article advocates for the consistent application of good governance principles, emphasising their applicability from the central to the village level. It stresses the importance of principles such as community participation, upholding the rule of law, transparency, stakeholder engagement, consensus-oriented decision-making, equality, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, and

strategic vision for achieving clean and responsible village governance (Sjamssoeddin et al., 2023). The inconsistent application of these principles poses a significant challenge to the government. To overcome this, the government must establish work rules or governance systems, aligning them with regional autonomy principles. Regional autonomy, defined as the rights, authorities, and obligations of the region, allows for self-regulation in government affairs following laws and regulations. The success of the government's working rules is intertwined with factors of good and correct governance, ultimately contributing to prosperous and thriving societies. The output of such governance is a robust and sound governance system.

### **Literature Review**

In this study, the author employs a new institutional theory, focusing on informal institutions and their significant interactions with external communities (Munir et al., 2020). The new institutional approach posits that interactions with the external environment, including society, are shaped by the interests of individual or political actors, thereby influencing the course of institutions. An illustrative example is the interaction between institutional actors and the behaviour of interest groups external to the institution, where the conduct of these groups can impact the actions of actors within the institution through networking, communication, and structural implementation.

While institutional theory forms the basis of this article, the researcher also integrates aspects of good governance theory to examine the actors involved in village governance. Good governance, characterised by participation, orientation, accountability, responsiveness, effectiveness, fairness, inclusive consensus, and adherence to the rule of law, ensures minimised corruption, consideration of minority views, and the inclusion of vulnerable voices in decision-making (Sujana et al., 2020). This governance approach is responsive to both present and future community needs.

The concept of “good” in good governance, as defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2004, holds dual meanings (Wulansari et al., 2019). First, it encapsulates values that uphold people's will and contribute to achieving national independence, sustainable development, and social justice. Second, it incorporates the functional aspects of effective and efficient governance in fulfilling

these objectives. According to UNDP, good governance entails the implementation of a stable, responsible, efficient, and effective state government, fostering constructive interaction between the country's domains, private sector, and society. The principles of good governance provide the mechanisms and guidelines to balance stakeholders' interests. The characteristics of good governance realisation, as outlined by UNDP, are summarised in Figure 2 based on various study results.



Figure 2: Characteristics of Good Governance

Source: Vyas & Aktan, 2017

The enactment of the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 6 of 2014 on Village Government is perceived as the practical implementation of government affairs and the representation of local community interests within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia's governmental framework (Fingerprints, 2015). Within this context, the village government assumes a pivotal role in fostering community governance to achieve village independence through active engagement in development initiatives. In the realm of social processes, the primary responsibility of the village government is to cultivate democratic living conditions, provide effective social services, and instil a sense of peace and justice (Sidik, 2015). Moreover, it is emphasised that effective governance at the village level necessitates leadership orientation towards public services, wherein the adoption of good governance practices is positioned as a strategic imperative.

According to Dwipayana, Ari, and Sutoro (2003), the realisation of village independence through good governance at the village level involves the comprehensive mapping of four main elements. These elements include the state, represented by the village government; the political community, represented by the village representative body; civil society, encompassing various institutions and social organisations; and the economic community, comprising the financial district, as well as production and distribution sectors facilitated by actors and economic organisations within the village (Zhang et al., 2020). The interplay of these governance elements is illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 in the following section, providing a comprehensive overview of their interconnected dynamics.

Recent studies continue to emphasise the importance of institutional capacity-building and participatory governance in enhancing village-level governance. The effectiveness of governance reforms depends on the institutional environment, leadership, and administrative capacity of local governments (Syukri, 2024). The decentralisation process in Indonesia, while providing greater autonomy to village governments, has also exposed weaknesses in policy implementation, coordination, and financial management (Talitha, Firman, & Hudalah, 2020). A major challenge is ensuring that governance structures remain inclusive, transparent, and accountable, particularly in managing village funds and involving local communities in decision-making processes. Research suggests that digital governance innovations, such as e-governance platforms and online financial reporting, have the potential to improve transparency and accountability in village administration (Sofyani, Pratolo, & Saleh, 2022). However, technological literacy and infrastructure disparities remain significant barriers to widespread adoption in rural areas.

Another critical aspect of good governance at the village level is social accountability and community engagement, which play a vital role in ensuring that governance practices are aligned with the needs of local populations. Studies indicate that village governance is most effective when it integrates community-driven development (CDD) approaches that encourage bottom-up planning and decision-making (Lahfana & Machdum, 2025). However, even though regulatory frameworks support participatory governance, challenges such as elite domination, lack of institutionalised participation mechanisms, and limited civic awareness

continue to hinder meaningful community involvement (Wawo et al., 2025). To address these gaps, scholars propose enhancing the training programmes for village leaders, strengthening the legal frameworks for participatory budgeting, and promoting gender-inclusive governance models to ensure diverse representation in decision-making processes.

## Methods

This study adopts qualitative methods involving a descriptive approach. As articulated by Bogdan and Taylor and cited by Moleong (2000:3), qualitative research is geared towards generating descriptive data, presented in written or spoken words and derived from observations of people and behaviours. In parallel, descriptive research serves the purpose of portraying or delineating existing phenomena, encompassing both natural and human-engineered elements. Primary data serves as the foundation for this research, consisting of information obtained directly from the source. The collection of primary data involves methods such as observation, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGD) with pertinent sources (Busetto et al., 2020). Complementing the primary data, secondary data is also utilised to refine the research process. These secondary sources encompass a variety of records, books, and magazines, including financial statements, government reports, articles, and theoretical books. The research employs the observation method, as outlined by Sugiyono (2016: 228), which emphasises that observations allow researchers to discern details that are overlooked or deemed ordinary by others in the environment. The interview method is employed to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas through question-and-answer sessions to contribute meaning to the specific topic under investigation (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Additionally, the documentation method is utilised to capture records of past events through writings, drawings, or monumental works.

The selection of sources is critical to obtaining comprehensive information. The criteria for source selection include individuals who possess a deep understanding of the challenges and strategies in strengthening village governance for good governance at the local level (Bhangu et al., 2023). Furthermore, they should be actively involved in the activities being investigated, have adequate time for interviews, refrain from biasing information, and exhibit a level of unfamiliarity with research to add an element of novelty (Morgan, 2022). To determine

the sources, the study employs the purposive sampling technique, deliberately selecting individuals who are considered representative of the population based on specific criteria or considerations.

Table 1: Identities of Sources

No.	Sources	Total
1.	Head of Bappeda West Aceh	1 person
2.	Head of DPMG Office of West Aceh	1 person
3.	Secretary of DPMG Office of West Aceh	1 person
4.	Head of Field within the scope of DPMG West Aceh	4 persons
5.	P3MD: Village Companion Coordinator Team in West Aceh	6 persons
6.	TP2D West Aceh	1 person
	Total Sources	14 persons

Sources: Author's Fieldwork

Qualitative research employing the human instrument plays a pivotal role in delineating the research focus, selecting information sources, conducting data collection, evaluating data quality, interpreting data, and drawing conclusions based on findings (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The nature of qualitative research is characterised by ambiguity, where research objectives, data sources, and anticipated outcomes lack clear definitions. Humans are the primary research instruments due to the inherent lack of definitive forms in research problems, procedures, hypotheses, and expected results. The unpredictable and unclear nature of these elements necessitates the central role of human involvement throughout the research process (Suandi et al., 2022).

All the obtained data undergo qualitative analysis, eschewing statistical test models in favour of a descriptive presentation model. The data analysis comprises three components: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion derivation (Otani, 2017). In the data reduction process, the study focuses on specific aspects to simplify the abstraction of data from the field. This iterative process occurs throughout the study, involving the grouping of data based on the specific problem under investigation. The presentation of data encompasses the comparison and connection of primary data gathered from the field with secondary data obtained from literature sources. The subsequent interpretation of this combined data aims to extract meaningful concepts and insights. Conclusions are drawn based on the interpretation of

both primary data acquired through interviews and observations and secondary data derived from books, the internet, and journals (Mayring, 2022). An essential step in this process involves the reinterpretation of conclusions to prevent misinterpretation and ensure the maturation of the obtained results. This iterative approach plays a crucial role in refining and enhancing the robustness of the research findings.

Table 2: Map of Village Governance Elements and their Relational Issues

Governance Elements	Actor	Arena	Relational Issues
Country	The village chief and village device	Regulation, control of society, policy management, finance, services	Accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and control
Political society	Village representative body	Representation, articulation, aggregation, formulation, legislation, socialisation, control	Capacity, accountability, and responsiveness
Civil society	Institutional, social organisations, citizens	Empowerment, cooperation, mutual assistance, networking	Participation (voice, access, and control)
Economic society	Actors and economic organisations	Production and distribution	Policy access, social accountability

Source: Dwiapayana, Ari, & Sutor (2003)

## Discussion

### *Good Governance in Village Administration*

The State Administration Institute has determined that good governance entails the establishment of a robust and responsible administration within the state government, characterised by effectiveness and efficiency. This is achieved by fostering a “synergy” of constructive interactions among the state, the private sector, and society (Said, 2021). The emphasis lies on the cohesive collaboration between these entities to ensure the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the state’s administrative functions. Additionally, both the Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank contribute nuanced perspectives on good governance.

According to their definitions, good governance involves the implementation of social development management and responsibility aligned with democratic principles and efficient market practices. This includes strategies to avoid the misallocation of scarce investment funds, prevent political and administrative corruption, exercise budget discipline, and establish political and legal frameworks conducive to the growth of entrepreneurial activities (Pavlyshyn et al., 2021). In essence, these definitions underscore the multifaceted nature of good governance, encompassing responsible administration, democratic principles, market efficiency, anti-corruption measures, fiscal discipline, and the facilitation of a conducive environment for entrepreneurial development. The collaborative and constructive interaction between the state, private sector, and society emerges as a common thread in promoting effective and efficient governance.

#### *Community Participation in Development Planning*

Village development necessitates meticulous planning based on the current conditions, encompassing natural resources, human capital, financial resources, infrastructure, technology, and the aspirations of local communities (Margareta & Salahudin, 2022). A comprehensive approach is essential to address the unique characteristics of each village and align development initiatives with local wisdom. Crucially, community participation emerges as a cornerstone in the decision-making process, influencing policies throughout the developmental stages. This involvement spans planning, decision-making, implementation, evaluation, and the utilisation of development outcomes. The significance of community participation is paramount, as it ensures that plans and programmes are tailored to local contexts.

However, the study reveals a notable gap in community inclusion across villages in West Aceh Regency. The absence of community involvement in determining activities and programmes has resulted in a pervasive lack of trust in the programmes initiated by stakeholders. Community participation is identified as a critical factor influencing the success of development programmes and fostering village community development (Damayanti & Syarifuddin, 2020). The deficiency in community engagement extends beyond decision-making,

encompassing limited involvement in problem identification and recognition of existing community potential. Addressing these gaps becomes imperative to enhance the efficacy of development initiatives and strengthen the bond between stakeholders and the communities they serve.

*Emphasising Good Governance: The Crucial Role of Transparency*

In the current era of reform and technological advancement, including Industrial Revolution 4.0, the principles of good governance have become imperative at all levels of governance from national to village levels. Transparency, particularly concerning matters impacting society, is now an essential requirement (Anjinappa, 2015). Establishing trust is the primary objective of governance, and transparency plays a pivotal role in achieving this goal. Each entity involved in implementing the principles of good governance must exhibit responsiveness to the needs and concerns of various societal elements. Efforts to enhance responsiveness should be consistently applied, especially in public sectors that may tend to be closed and power oriented. Regular surveys are essential to gauge general satisfaction with public sector services and to ensure that responsiveness is continually improved.

To realise government accountability to the public, a key strategy is the consistent application of transparency, particularly in executing programmes and activities. Transparency in governance holds significant meaning, allowing the public to be informed about government policies, both proposed and implemented (Castellano, 2018). Openness in administration enables the public to provide feedback and assess the approaches taken by the government. Regarding village budget management (ADG) in West Aceh Regency, transparency is mandated by Permendagri Number 113 of 2014, requiring the display of notice boards or billboards detailing ongoing activities and budget allocations (Kadjudju et al., 2017). However, achieving easy online access to cash inflow and outflow records in every village within the region remains a considerable challenge. Furthermore, village heads (*keuchik*) are obligated by Law Number 6 of 2014 on villages to submit various reports periodically, including:

1. Submission of a report on the implementation of the Village Government at the end of the budget year to the Regent of West Aceh.

2. Submission of a report on the performance of the Village Government at the end of the term to the Regent of West Aceh.
3. Submission of a written statement of governance to Tuha Peut at the end of the fiscal year.
4. Accountability Report on the Realisation of Village APB Implementation to the Regent of West Aceh at the end of the fiscal year.
5. Realisation Report on Village Fund Use.

Despite these regulations, challenges persist in achieving comprehensive transparency in the management of village funds, emphasising the need for ongoing efforts to fulfil these requirements effectively.

#### *Fostering Government Responsiveness for Effective Governance*

In the pursuit of good governance, they are dedicated to embodying the principle of government responsiveness, ensuring a government that is not only sensitive but also swift in addressing the concerns and aspirations of the public (Abu El-Haj, 2018). The essence of good governance lies in the government's adeptness in understanding the genuine needs of its people and proactively analysing community requirements. Consequently, the government is expected to formulate inclusive policies and strategies that prioritise the overall welfare of society without any form of discrimination. Considering the limited availability of village funds for development, prudent measures must be applied. Firstly, the determination of development programme priorities should be based on measurable criteria. Secondly, a bottom-up approach is essential, obliging the active involvement of the community and stakeholders in deciding programme priorities. Thirdly, each proposed programme must demonstrate productivity. Lastly, the submission of programmes should align with the local wisdom of each village.

While the principle of responsiveness is being applied to some extent, challenges persist. The main obstacle lies in the ineffective implementation of certain programmes, hindering the realisation of village-level independence (Abrahams & Newton-Reid, 2008). Furthermore, the expression of responsiveness through a five-year strategic plan (*renstra*) encounters complications, as some villagers propose programmes that deviate from the outlined plan, creating

difficulties in accommodation due to misalignment with ratified documents. Another hurdle identified in West Aceh Regency is the prevalence of temporary acting (Pjs) village heads (*keuchik*) in 224 out of 322 villages. This situation presents various challenges, including limitations on the rights of Pjs *keuchik*, which differ from definitive *keuchik*, and the inability of Pjs *keuchik* to create programmes beyond the provisions of the ratified five-year strategic plan (*renstra*) (Maifizar, 2022). Addressing these obstacles becomes paramount for effective governance and the successful implementation of responsive strategies for community development.

### *Inclusive Governance through Consensus Building*

In the pursuit of effective and inclusive governance, the principle of consensus orientation stands as a cornerstone. This principle advocates that decisions must undergo a meticulous process of deliberation and consensus. Such a decision-making approach, forged through agreement, binds the various stakeholders, ensuring the efficacy of decision implementation. The deeper the involvement of constituents in the decision-making process, the more faithfully the aspirations and needs of the community are represented (Annahar, Widianingsih, & Muhtar, 023). Participation fosters rigorous supervision and control over general policies, elevating the levels of prudence and accountability in their implementation. Hence, the consistent application of the consensus principle is strongly recommended across all levels of government management to facilitate the realisation of noble ideals, particularly in the context of achieving an independent village.

However, the application of the consensus principle in each village within West Aceh Regency reveals an uneven landscape. A notable challenge emerges during crucial events like *musrembang* (community development planning meeting) at the village level, where community attendance can be inconsistent (Tahulending et al., 2018). This unpredictability has a tangible impact on the types of programmes that can be implemented effectively in the future. Ensuring a consistent application of the consensus principle encounters challenges, primarily stemming from its uneven implementation. Concerns arise over the lack of uniformity in community-driven decisions across the regency. This inconsistency poses a notable obstacle to achieving cohesive and community-supported initiatives. Proactive efforts are needed to

encourage and facilitate community attendance during key events to foster a more inclusive decision-making environment. This strategic emphasis on community engagement is crucial for ensuring that the diverse voices within the community are heard and considered.

In addition, strengthening the communication channels between the government and the community is identified as a critical factor. Transparent and informative communication plays a pivotal role in keeping the community well-informed, motivated, and actively involved in the consensus-building process. Effective communication is key to building trust and ensuring that the community feels connected and engaged in decision-making processes. Moreover, investing in training and capacity-building initiatives emerges as a crucial step. Empowering community members with the necessary knowledge and skills is imperative for meaningful participation in the consensus-building process (Tambaip et al., 2023). An informed and engaged community is fundamental for the success of participatory decision-making. Despite the existing challenges to consistently apply the consensus principle, there are significant opportunities for improvement. Prioritising enhanced community engagement, communication enhancement, and capacity-building initiatives can pave the way for more effective and inclusive governance in West Aceh Regency. This, in turn, can contribute significantly to the overarching goal of building independent and prosperous villages.

### *Equality in West Aceh Regency*

The principle of equality is foundational, emphasising the government's responsibility of ensuring the inclusive involvement of all parties in the political process without any form of exclusion. In the context of West Aceh Regency, the village governments adhere to this principle, demonstrating a commitment to non-discrimination among constituents. Across various domains, including politics, health, and other areas, the village governments have strived to apply the principle of equality in service delivery. In the political sphere, there is a concerted effort to ensure that all community members, without exception, have a voice in processes like *musrembang*. This commitment to inclusivity aligns with the broader goal of fostering a political environment in which every individual feels represented and valued.

Furthermore, the principle of equality extends to public services, with the village governments in West Aceh Regency emphasising fair treatment and equal access for all. This commitment underscores the importance of ensuring that public services are not only accessible to everyone but also administered without discrimination. The active involvement of the community in *musrembang* exemplifies the village governments' dedication to equal participation, creating opportunities for collective decision-making. This approach aligns with the broader principles of good governance, where equality plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of inclusivity and shared responsibility. The village governments in West Aceh Regency uphold the principle of equality across various domains, fostering an environment where all individuals are treated fairly and have an equal opportunity to participate in political processes and access public services (Trisna et al., 2022). This commitment to equality aligns with the overarching principles of good governance, contributing to the development of inclusive and responsive local governments.

#### *Promoting Effective and Efficient Governance in West Aceh Regency*

Effectiveness and efficiency form the backbone of governmental processes, ensuring that institutions yield results aligned with the citizens' needs. The West Aceh Regency Government is committed to maximising existing resources, striving for effectiveness and efficiency in producing regulations and policies, as well as managing the state's finances. To enhance accessibility, each village in West Aceh Regency establishes a Public Service Office, reinforcing the government's dedication to serving the community. The Department of Population and Civil Registration in West Aceh Regency, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, actively encourages village officials to optimise Service Operational Standards (SOP) for public services. This initiative aims to streamline administrative processes and enhance the overall efficiency of the services provided to the community (Samsidar et al., 2022). Moreover, public services in every village in West Aceh Regency, including processes related to vital documents on population and marriage, are administered with accessibility in mind, often at no cost to the residents. In the realm of health, the village governments of West Aceh Regency organise monthly *posyandu* (community health program with emphasis for mother and child) sessions for toddlers, underscoring their commitment to the well-being of the community.

These initiatives collectively reflect the dedication of the West Aceh Regency Government to fostering effective, efficient, and citizen-centric governance.

### *Fostering Accountability in Village Governance*

Accountability serves as the cornerstone, compelling government officials to assume responsibility for their actions and policies. Whether in government, the private sector, or community organisations, decision-makers are accountable to the community and relevant institutions. The manifestation of accountability varies, contingent on the nature of the organisation involved. In the context of the village governments in West Aceh Regency, accountability takes tangible forms as *keuchik* (village chiefs) deliver comprehensive reports (Phurma & Najamudin, 2022). At the close of each budget year and the conclusion of their term, *keuchik* dutifully presents a detailed performance report on the village government to the Regent. Additionally, a written statement of governance is submitted to Tuha Peut at the end of every fiscal year. Furthermore, the transparency of financial matters is emphasised through the dissemination of village budget financial statements to the community during the *musrengbang* event. While the village device is entrusted with specific responsibilities aligned with their roles, there remains room for improvement. In some instances within West Aceh, certain members of the village device fall short in performing their duties and responsibilities. Addressing these gaps in accountability is pivotal to fortifying the principles of transparent and responsible governance within West Aceh Regency.

### **Challenges in Implementing Good Governance at the Village Level**

The implementation of good governance principles at the village level faces a set of distinct challenges, each demanding thoughtful solutions to ensure effective governance. Despite the village governments' intention to encourage community involvement in governance, not all residents actively engage in the process (PAKEH, 2018). The multifaceted roles of villagers, encompassing farming, craftsmanship, and employment, often hinder their full participation in village governance activities. The educational backgrounds of village officials play a crucial role in determining their competencies. However, not all officials possess a bachelor's degree qualification or higher. The strategic placement of officials based on their expertise remains a critical consideration,

emphasising the importance of enhancing the competencies of the village apparatus. Many villages still rely on traditional manual administrative processes, neglecting the benefits of information technology.

The persistence of methods like bookkeeping and writing on boards results in inadequate documentation. The urgent need to transition to information technology is essential for more efficient and streamlined administrative processes. The allocation of substantial budgets for community empowerment programmes often leads to conflicting interests during decision-making (Ikhsan et al., 2020). This struggle may result in unaddressed community desires, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and transparent approach to decision-making processes. The scarcity of facilities and infrastructure at the village level poses a significant challenge to effective public service delivery. The absence of essential infrastructure hampers the villages' ability to meet the diverse needs of their community members adequately. Addressing these obstacles requires a multifaceted strategy that encompasses competency development, the integration of information technology, and a participatory approach to decision-making. By overcoming these hurdles, village governance can evolve towards a more inclusive, transparent, and efficient model.

### **Strategic Measures for Improved Village Governance**

Implementing effective strategies is crucial to achieving the goal of good governance at the village level. Two key strategies are highlighted for enhancing the implementation of good governance principles (Ilhamsyah et al., 2020). Firstly, providing training and education to village officials is essential, particularly in areas related to public services and responsiveness to community concerns. Equipping village devices with the necessary knowledge and skills would give them a better understanding of the needs of the community and enable them to respond effectively to any complaints or issues raised by residents. Training programmes should focus on enhancing the capacity of village officials to deliver quality public services and constructively engage with the community.

Secondly, improving discipline and performance among village employees is integral to the successful implementation of good governance. A disciplined workforce ensures that tasks and responsibilities are carried out efficiently, contributing to the overall

effectiveness of the village government. Cultivating a culture of professionalism and commitment among village devices is key to building a governance framework that is responsive, accountable, and aligned with the principles of good governance (Sari & Maifizar, 2023). These strategies, centred around education and discipline, can play a pivotal role in fostering good governance practices at the village level. Continuous efforts to enhance the capabilities of village officials and instil a culture of discipline are essential components of a successful governance framework that benefits the community at large.

### **Conclusion**

This study underscores the need for further improvements in applying good governance principles in village governance in West Aceh Regency. Key areas requiring attention include participation and responsiveness, which are vital components of effective governance at the local level. While the village governments demonstrate strength in certain aspects, identifying and addressing the gaps is essential for comprehensive and inclusive governance. The uneven community participation in the governance process across villages poses a challenge to the effectiveness of decision-making and programme implementation. To overcome this issue, the village governments have implemented strategies such as providing continuous education and training. By enhancing the capabilities of village officials, the government aims to create a more responsive and proactive administration that caters to the needs and aspirations of the community. Another strategy involves recruiting young individuals with specific criteria to assist the village officials with their tasks. This approach recognises the value of fresh perspectives and youthful energy in contributing to the development agenda. Additionally, the government is actively working to stimulate and encourage the active involvement of village communities. By organising activities that directly involve residents, the village governments seek to build a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for the villages' progress. The future direction for village governance in West Aceh Regency should continue along the path of strengthening participatory practices and responsiveness. Efforts to bridge the gaps in community involvement should be sustained through ongoing education, engagement activities, and targeted recruitment of individuals who can bring new ideas and energy to the governance process.

Furthermore, embracing technology and modernising administrative practices could enhance the efficiency of village governance. Adopting information technology for record-keeping, communication, and public service delivery can streamline processes and improve transparency. A forward-looking vision should also emphasise sustainability and resilience. Integrating environmental and social sustainability into governance practices will contribute to the community's long-term well-being. This includes promoting eco-friendly initiatives, disaster preparedness, and inclusive development that considers the needs of all community members. The village governance in West Aceh Regency should prioritise continuous improvement, innovation, and inclusivity. By addressing current challenges and proactively planning for the future, the village governments can better serve their respective constituents and contribute to the overall development and prosperity of the region.

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(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36

(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

Reference:

*The glorious Qur'ān*. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

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In-text:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)

(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

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